State of Missouri

Improving the Hiring Process

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Dear Colleagues,

Approximately two years ago we assumed the challenge of conducting a critical evaluation and analysis of the procedures involved in the hiring process in the Missouri Merit System. This analysis involved a review of the existing service delivery mechanisms and an assessment of the overall level of agency satisfaction with the services rendered by the division. One of the most critical stages of this process, was a series of focus groups conducted with state agencies to discuss the following:

- practices and processes the division is doing well;
- the extent to which the division is meeting agency needs;
- the clarity and effectiveness of current practices;
- improvements that can be made to ensure the effectiveness and timeliness of the application process; and
- service delivery improvements within the Division that will better meet agency needs.

At the conclusion of each focus group session, we promised a summary of the comments/concerns that emerged. I am pleased to provide you with the summary of information and recommendations.

This report also includes background information on the Missouri Results Initiative: "Improving the Hiring Process" as well as information on similar practices, services or processes in other states. Additionally, you will find recommendations to reduce the time required to add applicants to the list of eligibles, methods to improve communication with merit system agencies and opportunities to pool resources to continuously improve service and reduce cost. This report has been presented and discussed with the Commissioner of Administration and the Personnel Advisory Board.

I look forward to your continued support as we begin the implementation phase. Please feel free to share with me your views, concerns and further recommendations aimed towards our goal of ensuring that the State of Missouri continues to be a great place to work.

Sincerely

Alma G. McKinney

E X E C U T I V E S U M M A R Y

The Commissioner of the Office of Administration (OA) gave a directive to identify measures that would improve the overall hiring processes in the Missouri Merit System. Specifically, to:

- Identify measures and strategies that could reduce the time to add applicants to the list of eligibles.

- Identify methods to simplify the application process for job seekers and agencies.

- Identify technological advances that would enable the division to expedite the application process, including the development and implementation of an electronic application.

- Identify methods to assist hiring managers and supervisors in state agencies.

A team of personnel representatives, including managers and analysts, agency representatives and individuals representing OA reviewed historical data and previous service delivery strategies. The team also reviewed current application and agency performance data and processes to establish "best practices". Suggestions, comments and recommendations from agencies are believed to be critical to improving the overall hiring processes in the Missouri Merit System. Therefore, through a series of focus group presentations, the team collected qualitative data from Merit System Agencies (MSA) in an attempt to answer the following questions:

- What is the Division of Personnel (DOP) doing well?

- Is the DOP meeting your needs?

- Are the DOP processes clear and effective?

- How can the DOP improve the effectiveness and timeliness of the application process?

- How can the DOP better meet your needs?

This report includes the responses gathered from MSA's, and recommendations from the DOP to improve the overall hiring process.

Agencies suggested that the division should:

- Standardize the application form used by potential candidates for employment with the state and make the agency specific supplement, an optional document that captures agency specific information only.

- Develop an application and make it available online.

- Identify a mechanism that would enable an applicant to update his/her application form without having to complete a new application every six months.

- Eliminate exams.

- Eliminate the rule of top 15/15%.

- Empower agencies to determine classification and level of positions.

- Establish a hotline where agencies can call the division on questions relative to what is permissible under the Merit System, FMLA, ADA, INS regulations, etc.

- Establish and publish a list of frequently asked questions and post them on the division's Webpage.

- Develop an advertising contract that would enable agencies to collectively advertise, thereby realizing savings when advertising in the major newspapers.

- Establish a training program to assist agencies with interviewing strategies, techniques and current practices.

The DOP reviewed the suggestions and responses from the agencies and recommends the:

- **Upgrade of recruitment**, through collective advertising of merit system vacancies and a centralized vacancy listing.

- **Upgrade of the applicant pool**, by ensuring that the top 15/15% serves the "Merit" concept.

- **Upgrade of the application process** by developing an electronic application system and communicating with applicants via the Internet to expedite responses and saving the cost of postage.

- **Upgrade of examination,** by reviewing the reliability and validity of exams, streamlining exams when possible and developing an online examination system.

- **Upgrade of existing communication** through a renewed commitment to continuously improve the overall quality of service delivered to agencies.

Background

In FY02, the Commissioner of the Office of Administration (OA) directed a team of state employees to identify ways to improve the hiring process in Merit System Agencies (MSA). Specifically, how to simplify the application process; how to reduce the time it takes the Division of Personnel (DOP) to process applications; how to reduce the time it takes state agencies to hire applicants from a list of eligibles; how to leverage technology to improve services, and identify methods to better assist MSA. The team consisted of representatives from OA, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Economic Development (DED) who reviewed existing data (i.e., number of jobs applied for, number of applications received, number of names added to registers, number of certificates requested, number of appointments from registers, number of days it takes an agency to hire from a certificate, etc.), processes and practices, then made the following recommendations for improving the hiring process:

- Develop and maintain a centralized location for recruiting and advertising

- Develop an electronic application

- Decentralize the hiring process, delegating screening and selection to agencies

The team submitted their recommendations to the director of the DOP, who requested that the team's recommendations be presented to MSA's for input, suggestions or recommendations. A team of personnel analysts, managers, and staff from the DOP conducted a series of focus group meetings with agencies to present the recommendations. Additionally, the DOP team formulated a series of questions to better understand the agencies perception of the existing service provided by the DOP.

The questions formulated to agencies were,

1. What is the DOP doing well?

2. Is the DOP meeting your needs?

3. Are the DOP processes clear and effective?

4. How can the DOP improve the effectiveness and timeliness of the application process?

5. How can the DOP better meet your needs?

This report presents information gathered during the focus group meetings with MSA's, a review of current related practices in surrounding states, the recommendations from the DOP and steps for continuously improving the hiring process.

WHAT ARE WE DOING WELL?

In addition to suggestions and recommendations for improving current processes, the focus group sessions were designed to capture information on processes and services the Division of Personnel (DOP) is doing well. While the level of satisfaction varied by agencies, there were several recurring themes that emerged during most of the sessions.

- **The effective communication, responsiveness and cooperative spirit of DOP staff**.

  The Department of Social Services (DSS) expressed their satisfaction with the effective communication skills displayed by DOP staff. Additionally, DSS reiterated their commitment to working together to improve services in Missouri state government.

- **The quick response to inquiries on agency specific issues**.

  DSS complimented the quick response rate DOP staff provides when agency specific questions are presented via telephone or emails. According to one agency representative, "the quick response to our inquiries allows our agency to reasonably respond to staff on issues like PAB rules, State Personnel Law, etc."

- **Having a repository of individuals who meet minimum qualifications**.

  This repository enables applicants to have a centralized location for submitting applications, testing and getting answers on eligibility for Merit positions.

- **Assessing minimum qualifications**

  Several representatives from different agencies suggested that it is important to allow the DOP to assess minimum qualifications as an impartial and objective reviewer. In fact, representatives from two agencies believed that "allowing the DOP to perform the evaluation of minimum qualification eliminates undue pressure from the outside to hire someone based on his/her status rather than his/her ability to meet the

minimum requirements." The Department of Corrections (DOC) also found the division's review of minimum qualifications to be very effective and "beneficial when having to defend a hiring decision in front of the Missouri Commission of Human Rights or outside courts."

- **Some assessment tools are effective and reliable**

  The assessment tools used in some instances appear to accurately measure the desired skill level an applicant should possess to effectively perform the duties and responsibilities of a specific job. For example, Department of Public Safety (DPS) suggested that the tool used to evaluate applicants for Water Patrol is very effective and reliable.

- **Information requested on applications is useful**

  DPS representatives supported the current Application for Employment format, since the applicants must provide information that adequately captures critical information necessary for conducting background checks.

- **Performance management training**

  The Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) complimented the DOP on the Performance Management System, which according to one participant "all but eliminated potential conflicts on performance evaluation and substantially reduced the number of grievances." As the individual suggested, "now we don't have to worry about disagreements with a rating system."

In conclusion, based on the views expressed and recorded during the focus groups, it appears agencies generally agreed that the DOP is doing an adequate and acceptable job relative to serving the overall needs of the agencies. Understandably, several issues that

appeared to be acceptable to some agencies were not as acceptable to other agencies.

Notwithstanding, most representatives appear to genuinely appreciate the fact that the

DOP provided a team to facilitate the discussions and recorded their concerns,

suggestions and recommendations. As expressed by one participant, "Personnel is

listening to our needs and appears to be genuinely interested in finding out how they can

improve their service to agencies."

ARE WE MEETING YOUR NEEDS?

Critical to continuously improving the hiring process in MSA's is the understanding of real or perceived unmet needs or expectations, as established by agency representatives during the focus group presentations and discussions. For this reason, the team recorded all comments, despite the fact that some comments were in disagreement with current service delivery and practice in the DOP. During the focus groups, agencies revealed processes that, according to the representatives, would significantly improve the level of agency satisfaction with the DOP. Suggestions or comments relative to improving the hiring process, from the agencies perspective, included,

The 15/15% rule precludes agencies from selecting the "best candidate"

One of the most common issues that emerged from each focus group was the apparent limitation placed upon agencies by the 15/15% rule. Representatives argued that the 15/15% statute and rule does not allow agencies to effectively select the individual(s) that may best suit their needs.

1CSR 20-3.030(3)(A), states:

> "*In filling a vacancy in a permanent position subject to this law, the appointing authority first shall reinstate in rank order from the reinstatement register all previous employees of the division of service who have been laid off or demoted in lieu of layoff, and after that shall be entitled to choose from among the top fifteen (15) ranking available eligibles or the names of available eligibles comprising the top ranking fifteen percent (15) of available eligibles, whichever is greater, plus such additional eligibles as have a final rating equal to the last eligible in the selection group. Upon request of the appointing authority, the director may also certify, for each additional vacancy to be filled from the same certification, the next five (5) ranking available eligibles plus such additional eligibles as have a final rating equal to that of the last eligible in this expanded selection group.*"

Agency representatives presented various arguments relative to the 15/15% rule, which are,

- **The rule is restrictive and a barrier**

  A concern shared by most agencies appears to be that the rule often precludes appointing authorities from selecting the person who best meets the needs of an agency. As one manager explained, "it is not unusual to review the top fifteen (15) and not find an individual who can effectively do the job we expect. Instead, we must select an individual because he/she is in the top 15/15% on the list of eligibles. Meanwhile, a person on the list with the skills we seek, but who happens to be number nineteen (19) on the list of eligibles, must be ignored because of a score or place on the list, as agencies attempt to be in compliance with the rule."

- **The Rule Encourages Perpetual Applicants on the Certificates**

  Another issue that emerged during the focus group discussions is what representatives labeled the number of perpetual eligible applicants on the list. Managers reported that in many cases, as they review the list of eligibles, there are names who are always on the list, but who do not have the skills or desire to be considered for a current vacancy. Yet, this individual, based on his or her score, remains on the list of eligibles, thereby precluding someone else who may be interested and qualified from moving into the top fifteen (15) or top fifteen percent (15%). Agencies also attributed the "perpetual eligible syndrome" to the fact that some individuals are only interested in working for a specific agency or region and often remain on the register until the desired job becomes available.

- **The Rule Significantly Impacts Recruiting**

  Several agency representatives suggested that the rule impacts agency recruiting. According to representatives from the Department of Mental Health (DMH) and theDepartment of Labor and Industrial Relations (DOLIR), the existing rule can

affect an agency's ability to recruit members of historically underrepresented ethnic groups.

- **The rule may preclude an agency from hiring the "best person for the job"**

   Many argued that while an individual may have the skills to perform a specific task, the same individual may lack the interpersonal or "soft-skills" that are critical to the same position. Agencies further argued that the need to perform a task with fewer resources, and in shorter periods of time, makes selecting the appropriate person more important than ever. Essentially, agencies argued that based on this rule, they are not getting the quality individual they deserve or would like.

Several questions and challenges to the existing rule emerged during the focus group meeting. For example, one individual asked, "are certificates absolutely necessary and if so, why?" The rules and laws governing the DOP mandate that "*the director shall certify for selection the names of the top fifteen ranking available eligibles or the names of available eligibles comprising the top ranking fifteen percent of available eligibles, whichever is greater, plus such additional eligibles as have a final rating equal to that of the last certified eligible*.

Some Exams or Assessment Tools Are Outdated

Representatives from DMH and DPS voiced their concerns about some exams used to establish a ranking on the list of eligibles. A DMH representative suggested that the exams are "outdated and don't always keep pace with technology." Similarly, a DPS representative suggested that a different set of tools and processes should be explored for each classification.

Strict qualifications, based on quantity of work (not type of work) and inconsistencies in the interpretation of minimum qualifications by DOP staff.

Despite the appreciation expressed by some agency representatives for the flexibility of DOP staff, the issue of determining minimum qualifications appeared to be a concern to some agency representatives. Specifically, what appears to be a discrepancy between how the agencies interpret minimum qualifications and how the DOP interprets or assigns minimum qualifications.

Communication

While a few agency representatives expressed concerns and frustrations over what one individual labeled "poor communication" and another "lack of communication" between the DOP and the agencies, many agreed that the level of communications, responsiveness, cooperative spirit and accessibility of DOP staff was exemplary.

ARE OUR PROCESSES CLEAR AND EFFECTIVE?

Recognizing the importance of continuously reviewing processes to improve service

delivery, the DOP asked agencies to provide feedback on the effectiveness and clarity of

existing processes.

- **Update the process of adding names to the registers**. The time it takes to add

  names to the register often contributes to the applicant finding another job

  somewhere else and the agency possibly losing a good candidate. As explained

  by an agency representative, "this is particularly frustrating when an agency has

  recruited a candidate, then cannot find their names on the register."

- **Open vs. closed registers**. It appears that the current process of opening and

  closing registers is an issue that is unclear to several agency representatives.

  Particularly, why close some registers, while others remain open.

- **General information to agencies**. Agency representatives appear to need more

  information on processes, such as why it is necessary to designate a specific

  county on the application? Or, why it is necessary to send out a large number of

  letters on a clerical position when generally only a small number of individuals

  respond? Another question that emerged was the need by a specific agency to

  know if it is necessary to allow individuals to apply for a position, for which there

  is no current vacancy?

- **General Information to Applicants**. Agencies suggested that DOP evaluate the

  manner in which it communicates with applicants on existing applications.

  Specifically, the DOP must explain to applicants that completion of an Application for

  Employment with the State of Missouri is not an application for a specific position with

  a state agency or department.

HOW CAN DOP IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND TIMELINESS OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS?

Overwhelmingly, agencies suggested that using technology for applications and communication with agencies and applicants would significantly reduce the time it takes to process applications or respond to agency requests or inquiries. Overwhelmingly, agency representatives agreed that using available technology would reduce the mailing cost and postage, and would provide agencies with immediate access to applicant information. Depending upon how it is implemented and applied, the electronic application would also allow an applicant to update his or her application information electronically instead of having to submit a paper application every six months.

HOW CAN WE BETTER MEET YOUR NEEDS?

As a dominant technique in qualitative research, focus groups provide opportunities for exchange of ideas, which often leads to a better understanding of overall expectations or needs. The agency representatives shared various ideas, practices or processes that, if adopted by the DOP, could better meet their needs.

- **Develop a Dual System**

  Developing a dual system would empower agencies to use a register of eligibles or to advertise and hire for a specific position at their discretion. Agencies recognize that applicants would still be expected to meet the minimum qualifications established by the DOP. However, this system would enable potential candidates for employment to apply directly to the agencies.

- **Eliminate the 15/15% rule**

  By eliminating the 15/15% rule, agencies would effectively hire the individual or individuals who best meet their needs, based on their knowledge of what skills and attributes the "ideal" candidate must possess. Additionally, agencies contend that eliminating this rule would reduce the time it takes an agency to hire new staff.

- **Simplify Qualification Rating**

  Agency representatives collectively agreed that providing more flexibility and empowerment in hiring decisions to the agencies would better meet existing needs. The general consensus was that agencies would prefer a qualified or not-qualified rating system to determine eligibility for employment, thereby simplifying the existing process of evaluating qualifications based on a score and their rank on the list of eligibles.

- **Eliminate Exams**

  Several agency representatives supported the idea of eliminating some or all examinations. The main justification for this recommendation is the overall level of perceived effectiveness of the assessment tool(s) as a method for identifying or selecting the "best" candidate for an existing vacancy. Other agencies expressed their high level of satisfaction with the current examination process and tools used by the DOP to rank applicants.

- **Empower Agencies to Make the Classification Determination**

  Several agency representatives argued that the DOP should allow the agencies to determine the classification that best suits the need of the agency. Specifically, agencies are concerned that their understanding of the technical nature of the service they provide should qualify them as the "experts" who know what skill level an individual should have in each position. A DHSS representative explained "I know what a Radiological Technologist is and what skill level this individual should have."   However, "I don't understand why DOP should tell me that the classification requested is not what is needed to do the job?" Similar views were expressed by DOLIR and DNR. Essentially, the process of "negotiating appropriate classes" delays filling vacancies and does little to help the agencies identify the "best" candidate. One agency asked to be told up front if the answer to a classification request is "No." "Don't go back and forth with me for six weeks and then tell me."

Assume a Different Role

Agencies overwhelmingly requested that the DOP serve as a resource and consulting source rather than a supervisory or "policing" agency. Assuming a new philosophical approach to service would include assisting agencies in specific areas that would include, but not be limited, to:

➔ **Centralized recruiting & collaborative advertising**

The DOP, according to the agencies, would serve as an oversight or intermediary body who would focus more on reconciling the qualifications of applicants with agency needs, rather than communicating with applicants on why they are not qualified. Some agencies supported a suggestion to delegate the review of applications and / or the administration of the exams to the agencies. Notwithstanding, most agencies expressed concerns over assuming more work responsibilities, without additional staff. They argued that the DOP could delegate these responsibilities to the agencies on a class-by-class basis. As such, authority for approval of hiring transactions could be delegated to the agencies, thereby removing the DOP from the audit process. Of course, agencies would be required to hire within the parameters established in the rules, or provide justification of why a selection beyond the established parameters was necessary. This information would be maintained by the agencies, not the DOP.

➔ **Interviewing Strategies** – DOP could assist by providing training on staff selection and interviewing strategies that would enable the agencies to effectively identify the best candidate for a position.

➔ **Immigration & Naturalization Service Matters** – Several agency representatives mentioned the need for the DOP to provide assistance and guidance in hiring foreign workers and ensuring that the rules and regulations of the Immigration & Naturalization Services are clearly understood and followed.

➔ **Resource and Information Source**

Agency representatives agreed that the DOP could become a resource of information on issues that are germane to human resource management and service delivery. Essentially, the DOP would address or provide consultation on issues such as Merit System, Personnel Advisory Board Rules, Family Medical Leave Act, and American with Disabilities Act, etc.

Comparing Missouri to Other States: A Review of Personnel Practices & Processes

A review of states neighboring Missouri revealed that four (4) states currently have an electronic application system. Two (2) states reported that they are in the exploration and developmental stages of electronic applications.   The remaining two (2) states, while clearly interested and committed to the notion of an electronic application, are currently restricted by budget. It appears the states neighboring Missouri have all made a commitment to implementing an electronic application system and are currently at different stages in the process. This commitment is arguably based on the benefits of an electronic application system, which includes cost, efficiency, and effectiveness. Additional benefits of electronic applications include emailing letters to applicants, testing, scoring and addition to a register of eligibles, enabling applicants to apply for one or a series of classes online, etc.

➔ **Recruitment,** Tennessee, Arkansas and Kentucky list only current vacant jobs

➔ **Applicant pool,** Oklahoma, Tennessee, Kentucky and Kansas use a centralized written exam format. Arkansas, Nebraska and Iowa allow individual agencies to conduct testing as needed.

➔ **Application process,** Iowa, Arkansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma have online applications. Kentucky, Tennessee, Illinois and Kansas are currently working on online applications.

➔ **Examination,** Illinois, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Kentucky use similar or higher number of exams as Missouri. Although, Arkansas, Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa have few or no written exams.

Recommendations

One overall challenge for the DOP is to provide greater flexibility to the agencies in the selection process, while providing equal opportunities for all applicants interested in employment with the State of Missouri. To address this challenge, the DOP must continuously evaluate existing processes that have evolved over the past thirty years, to balance the needs of the agencies with the rights of applicants to fairly access and compete for available jobs. As such, the DOP recommends an evaluation and upgrade of various sections to continuously improve service delivery.

- **UPGRADE RECRUITMENT**

  ➔ **Collective Advertisings**

  The DOP recommends unifying the advertising of vacancies in newspapers throughout the state to centralize the location of all state government jobs to the potential applicant. Likewise, this measure should reduce the collective cost of advertising for agencies and should present a structured and consolidated vacancy listing generated from the DOP.

  Additionally, applicants would have a centralized location for vacancy listings that would enable him or her to quickly access all vacant positions in state government.

  ➔ **Centralize Vacancy Listing**

  This recommendation would enable the DOP to use technology to allow applicants to sort or query for the type of jobs they seek, by location, salary or agency, etc, although, MSA vacancy postings may be necessary at times. Missouri is one of very few states that have begun this process. DOP recommends further refining and standardizing of this process.

UPGRADE APPLICANT POOL

➔ **Ensure that Top 15 or 15% Serves the "Merit" Concept**

The DOP recommends upgrading examinations and examination ratings (RSMo

36.240.3) to ensure that candidates available on the register of eligibles are

qualified and ranked or grouped according to the requirements and needs of the

agencies; and as delineated in the class specification and minimum qualifications.

The DOP acknowledges the importance of providing MSA's, through the

examination and certification process, an effective mechanism for identifying

qualified candidates to fill vacancies, by ranking the most qualified candidates from

among those who meet the minimum qualification for a class. As such, the DOP

will ensure that the state's classification plan clearly specify the knowledge, skills,

experience and overall attributes necessary to effectively perform the duties of each

position. Similarly, the DOP will review the examination and rating of examination

used to rank qualified applicants for each class. This review will ensure that each

assessment tool yields scores that will facilitate the identification and selection of

the most qualified applicants, based on the knowledge, skills, and ability required

for the class. Likewise, this measure will ensure that the Merit System continues to

serve agencies by providing quality applicants for jobs in a fair and consistent

manner, while providing uniformity and equal access to state employment.

- **UPGRADE THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

By developing an effective and efficient electronic application, and using the system to

process and review applicant qualifications, testing for specific classes, generating list of

eligible candidates and communicating with applicants via the internet, the DOP would

become one of few states committed to blending service efficiency and technology.

➔ **Develop an Electronic Application**

To take advantage of technology, the DOP recommends the development of an electronic application. Considering the overall investment an electronic application would require the proposed application could focus on education, experience and related requirements for a job class. This focus would become more on information relevant to the job class, or job family, for which the individual is applying and not necessarily for all job classes for which the applicant could apply. If an applicant decides to apply for multiple merit system jobs, he or she may be entering answers to questions specific to each job. However, when an applicant reports for an interview, he or she can provide a resume, transcript, license, education, employment history and related training or certification, which are currently provided on the application. While the information currently collected may be needed for employment decisions, it is not necessarily required for applying for the examination. Conversely, maintaining one electronic application for an applicant to submit, without changing our review and examination processes, would likely result in significantly more work for DOP, as applicants could apply for more jobs, more easily and more quickly

➔ **Maintain Applicant Information Using the Internet**

Applicants should be able to maintain their name, address, availability and salary information on-line without having to contact the Division of Personnel to do so. It would be the applicant's responsibility to maintain the information, which would include an e-mail address for agencies to contact an applicant. Accommodations would have to be maintained in Personnel for some applicants to accomplish these changes.

➔**Agencies Contact Applicants Using E-Mail**

This recommendation will facilitate communication as access to the Internet and

email becomes more commonplace in our society. By contacting applicants via email, the DOP and agencies can expedite applications; responses and overall communication, while reducing the cost incurred to contact and correspond with applicants. Similarly, applicants would be able to respond more quickly thereby expediting the scheduling of interviews, which could reduce the overall time to hire and individual.

▪ **UPGRADE THE EXAMINATION PROCESS**

➔ **Evaluate the effectiveness of current exams**

The DOP would review the effectiveness of exams to ensure that testing tools are still measuring the skills agencies seek in new hires.

➔ **Update and streamline exams**

Written exams and E & E rating guides would be updated to solicit the most relevant information for the particular job class. The scope of the task and data analysis in developing exams must be balanced against the resources and time required to update and administer exams. For example, for written exams, DOP may need fewer, more relevant questions that can be completed by applicants online. Agencies would still be able to verify the results of the examinations during interviews. This recommendation would enable the DOP to rank applicants on registers, with fewer resources devoted to reviewing applications, and more resources devoted to maintaining viable examinations derived from up to date class specifications and minimum qualifications.

➔ **Develop on-line exams**

Applicants should be able to provide information in a manner that can allow for the minimum qualifications to be assessed and exams to be administered over the

Internet. Granted, there is concern about deceit in the examination process. But there are also penalties associated with this deceit. Qualifications and examinations need to elicit the information that can be assessed and calculated in a database. Applicants may be required to apply multiple times, to be considered for employment for multiple job classes.

- **UPGRADE EXISTING COMMUNICATION PROCESSES**

  ➔ **Reduce Cost and Increase Communication Using the Internet**

  As we move toward leveraging technology in the examination and selection process we need to ensure that everyone understands what the process is and how to go about applying for merit system positions and non-merit positions. Applying for a job classification and taking the exam may be a continuous process that doesn't require scheduling. An applicant may be added to a register after they complete an exam on-line. Names would be certified to agencies as vacancies occur, and according to the availability established and maintained by the applicant. Clear and concise instructions are critical to making the new processes work. Plus, we would likely need to accommodate "walk-in" applicants to search for jobs and complete applications on-line.

  ➔ **Commit to Continuously Improve Inter-Agency Communication**

  The DOP recognizes the importance of continuously improving overall communication processes. The DOP recommends periodic focus group meetings, and satisfaction surveys to ensure that the division continuously addresses the needs of all agencies.

Conclusion

The DOP reviewed recommendations from a team of state executives that would improve the hiring process in state government. The recommendations included the centralization of recruiting and advertising of vacant positions, the delegation of screening and selection of applicants and the development of an electronic application. The DOP conducted focus groups to share the preliminary recommendations for improving the hiring process, record agencies recommendations for improving the hiring process and gather information on what the DOP was doing well; is the DOP meeting agency needs? Are the processes clear and effective? How can the DOP improve the effectiveness and timeliness of the application process? And how can the DOP better meet the needs of the agencies?

Agencies welcomed the opportunity to share their views and asked the DOP to remove the 15/15% rule, eliminate some exams, standardize qualifications and improve communication. Agencies also asked the DOP to develop a dual system that would enable agencies to choose to hire from the list of eligibles or from other sources determined by the agency. The DOP viewed the request as potentially disruptive to fairness and service efficiency and did not recommend the dual system. Similarly, the DOP recommended the upgrading of recruitment, the upgrading of applicant pool, the upgrading of the application process, the upgrading of the examinations and the upgrading of overall communication. These recommendations are congruent with service delivery practices in surrounding states and are reflective of recommendations based on "best practices" and an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in service delivery.